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ABSTRACT

A formative inquiry into the institutional dimension of educational leadership is presented. Based on the thesis that individual educational leadership is a myth derived from misconceptions about social institutions and from the failure of the institution of education to value intellect, the paper demonstrates that these shortcomings stem from the power relationships in schools and the educational system. Following the analysis of Michel Foucault, the suggestion is made that not only is intellect devalued by schools, but it is the central subject of true education. Because learning entails collaboration, the concept of the individual organizational leader may obscure the relationships that promote or constrain the development of intellect as the legitimate objective of learning. The observation is made that teachers may be more likely to exercise leadership, as defined in this essay, than school managers. (87 references) (LMI)

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Intellect and the "Tyrannical Machine": An Interpretation of Leadership in Education

by

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Epigraphs

Taking a leaf out of recent business-management techniques, a handful of school-district leaders...turned over much of the responsibility for what goes on in their schools to classroom teachers. Working together with those principals who, in one teacher's words, "know how to lead by allowing others to lead," activist teachers in these districts are developing new practices and new curriculum that work for their particular students.

(Martin Carnoy, November 7, 1990)

Time and again, reformers have pointed out the failings of American education. They have cited its unsuccessful practices repeatedly--and quite often futilely.... William James might have blamed what he called "institutionalizing on a large scale." As James described it, ways of doing things that are well justified in the beginning tend, when established widely, to become "tyrannical machines."

(Lynne Cheney, October, 1990)

It's true that the promise of democracy is synonymous with the idea of the citizen. The enterprise requires the collaboration of everybody present, and it fails (or evolves into something else) unless enough people perceive their government as subject rather than object, as animate organism rather than automatic vending machine.

(Lewis Lapham, November, 1990)

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Intellect and the "Tyrannical Machine": An Interpretation of Leadership in Education

Introduction

A school or district administrator (especially a school principal) exerts a recognizable influence for better or worse, according to much of the recent literature on educational effectiveness (e.g., Nachtigal, 1982; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Stephens & Turner, 1988). This view finds immediate practical expression in schools.

The easiest route to the improvement of particular schools, for example, seems to be replacement of the principal of an ineffective school by a reform-minded "leader" (e.g., Richardson, Neel, & Cline, 1989). At the same time, instructional leadership per se (the species of leadership commended to principals) is quite rare. In self-reports, most principals reveal that they seldom exercise instructional leadership (e.g., Chance, 1988; Lovell & Phelps, 1977). So there are limits to this route to improvement: Leadership is in short supply (cf. Bennis, 1990).

Perhaps for this reason, regulatory bodies such as state educational agencies (SEAs) have established programs to proselytize the virtues of educational (especially "instructional") leadership among existing administrators, and college and university departments of educational administration are now beginning to re-style themselves as departments of educational leadership.

This essay is a formative inquiry into the institutional dimensions of this state of affairs. Its thesis is that educational leadership vested in an individual is a fiction that derives from misapprehensions about social institutions and from the underlying failure of the institution of education

to prize intellect. The discussion attempts to show that these shortcomings stem from the power relationships that infuse schools, in particular, and the institution of education, in general.

After a brief review of the idea that leadership is a managerial skill, the inquiry seeks the source of leadership in the power relations of contemporary society and their domination, through the agency of schooling, of intellect. Following the analysis of Michel Foucault, the essay suggests that not only is intellect misprized by schools, but it is the central subject of a true education.

Because learning--as compared to the manufacture or trade of goods--necessarily entails collaboration (e.g., most directly among students and teachers), the construct of the individual organizational leader, though of use to executives and bureaucrats, may obscure the relationships that advance or retard the nurture of intellect as the legitimate object of learning.[1]

The Utility of Individual Leadership

The construct of leadership serves useful ends. It is useful in restoring to managerial veiw an essential feature of organizations, without which the management of schools, in particular, founders.

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[1]This essay takes the view that the ultimate object of instruction is, in relative terms, cognitive growth, and in absolute terms, development of the intellect. Such an aim encompasses literacy, reason, and the related disposition to use both for understanding, interpreting, and changing the world. Collaboration is a necessary condition of this effort, because, as subsequent discussion will suggest, the object of attention by both teacher and student ought to be the rules that determine truth, if not truth itself. Education in this light is a matter of the authority of intellect, a subject (i.e., an active entity) that ought to motivate both parties to learning. The inculcation of received truth is not, in this analysis, education.

The key insight is the liberal idea that the administration of schools requires more than the rational management of workflow ("scientific management"). Education is arguably more a matter of human relations, for example, than the manufacture of telephone switching equipment. People, too, and ideas, must be managed (MacGregor, 1960; Smircich & Morgan, 1982). How such management can best be accomplished is the question that guides much research into the phenomenon of leadership. To the extent that individual administrators are systematically better able to direct human relations in organizations, they will more efficiently manage workflow.

School effectiveness and social forces. The construct of leadership, however, exhibits a naivete with respect to the social character of education, as opposed to the (individual) human side of (free) enterprise (cf. MacGregor, 1960). More and more observers are convinced that the (post-industrial) world is in a time of great change, and so, individual leadership must now seek institutional change, not simply adjustments in isolated organizations (such as particular schools). Contemporary school managers (lead by politicans and some bureaucrats), for example, profess change in the character of a general reformation of the institution of education and, in consequence, the experience of all teachers and all children in schools. This is a truly ambitious undertaking for a quantity or quality in so short a supply as leadership seems to be. A mighty fortress are our institutions, and as Cheney (1990) intimates, education (as an institution) may be the mightiest outpost in the wilderness of post-industrial reform.

A number of lines of research--representing diverse theoretical perspectives--conclude that various features of the social structure exert a strong influence on the ends and means to which schools have access in their

attempts to educate children (in particular) and citizens (in general).[1] That is, the political economy (i.e., the social relations that structure economic activity) provides schools with a limited set of tools with which to accomplish limited purposes. Certain purposes and certain tools are, in fact, beyond the reach of the schools--whatever the rhetoric of reform may indicate to the contrary.

Schools cannot directly change the circumstances of children's lives for the better, for example. Yet such circumstances are the strongest predictors of student achievement (Jencks et al., 1979). In fact, schools reinforce the effects of existing circumstances in the ways in which they organize

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[1]These lines of research include a functionalist sociology of education (e.g., Jencks et al., 1979); a structural-functionalist economics of education (e.g., Carnoy & Levin, 1985); a structural neo-Marxist political economy of education (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Wright, 1979, 1985); and a neo-Marxian "critical theory" of education (e.g., Anyon, 1987; Giroux, 1983). Theoretical and methodological precedents of these recent lines of work would include, among others, Veblen (1899), Waller (1932), Dewey (1962), and Counts (1930). These early observers of our contemporary world all understood education to be an expression of social relations. Of course, Dewey and Counts struggled, with little practical result, to shape schooling into a countervailing force for social change. A sanitized "progressive" education in the 1950s and 1960s vitiated the link between social reconstruction and intellect (critique), with the result that schools abandoned both social reconstruction and intellect in the 1970s and 1980s (the cry "Back to basics" was an emblem of this uncoupling). The limited exception of pedagogical innovations in the politically contained disciplines of math and science proves rather than disproves the point. Only recently has the theme of "science, society, and technology" (SST) entered the discourse about math and science curricula, without much actual effect on teaching. Though some educators are now struggling to overcome this legacy, the emphasis in this effort is on problem-solving in the context of restoring U.S. global economic domination and optimistic assumptions about what "employment needs" in the indeterminate future will be. The link between intellect and social reconstruction is not easy to reclaim, since the elite heritage of intellect (in its academic manifestation especially) is part of the problem. Subsequent discussion will touch on this problem through application of Foucault's work.

curriculum and deliver it to students (e.g., Anyon, 1987; Oakes, 1985).[1] This is the institution, and a sketch of its relation to other, perhaps more dominant, institutions that politicians and bureaucrats would have us believe nonexistent individual leaders will reform, under their tutelage and guidance. Perhaps the institutional limits of schooling include the nurture of false hopes, fantasies, and fads--among both educators and students.

Social forces and intellect. Limiting efforts to what schools can do is not necessarily reactionary so long as improvement yields more equitable access to the "life of the mind" as a primary institutional mission of schooling. But such a mission would strike most Americans as too narrow, too abstract, and quite elite. In fact, part of the operant mission of schools (i.e., the mission that is actually carried out, versus the one that is publicly acclaimed) may be to inculcate the view that development and use of the intellect is elitist (Coleman, 1963; Hofstadter, 1963; Weiner, 1950).

The point is not that reform has failed to produce the limited effects on achievement that might be anticipated to result from concerted good-faith efforts. Rather, in consideration of the preponderant influence of social forces arrayed against it, the construct of leadership conceptually limits the ability to generalize the very modest improvements in achievement that have already been attained or might--on the basis of the construct and its

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[1]This perception (first systematically documented in the Coleman report) convinces some observers that schools are instruments of domination (e.g., Giroux, 1983) to ensure responsiveness to national purposes (e.g., DeYoung, 1990; Spring, 1986).

relatives in the school effectiveness literature[4]--be anticipated for the future.

In this contest between influential social forces and improved student achievement (the ultimate criterion of school effectiveness in most of the popular formulations) it seems obvious that intellect ought to count for something, both among managers and students. Yet this connection is very seldom noted in the professional literature.[5]

Leadership: Role and Power

Babbie's (1973) ironic distinction between the "easy" and the "hard" sciences applies to the construct of leadership. Administration is certainly

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[4]The literature, of course, has identified a range of variables, defined in several contested configurations (see Dusewitz & Beyer, 1988, for the variety). In practice, SEAs and other organizations tend to "institutionalize" a particular configuration of variables as the "key" to the effectiveness of the schools subject to their authority and power. Nonetheless, little--if any--research has been done to confirm which of the competing configurations is comparatively most "effective" in capturing the general construct. Among the range of variables, however, some--such as instructional leadership--have been shown to be associated with school improvement to some extent. Evidence of the connection between instructional leadership (even so simple a manipulation as a change in a school's principal) and improved student achievement is, however, at best tenuous. Typically the evidence is anecdotal (Purkey & Smith, 1983). By contrast, other variables show a more direct effect on student achievement (e.g., changes in the type, pacing, structure, and distribution to students of questions posed by the teacher; cf. Berliner, 1984; Brophy, 1988; Reck, 1990). In general these variable have more to do with teachers than with administrators. This finding makes sense, since most teachers are in much closer contact with students than most administrators.

[5]A complete search of the Educational Resources Information Center database, 1966-1990, discovered ten articles or documents coordinating the search terms "school improvement," "school effectiveness," "academic achievement," or "leadership" with the term "intellect." Seven of the ten citations concerned J. P. Guilford's "Structure of Intellect" (SOI) model (a predictable result). Guilford's construct is really a conception of intelligence, and is most often considered in that context (Pendarvis, Howley, & Howley, 1990).

a hard science: It faces tortuous investigations of perceptions, contingencies, orientations, values, motives, and expectations. It has a difficult time establishing laws among such invisible quantities. In the language of Michel Foucault (1988), the science of administration is committed to one set of rules in the game of truth, despite the apparent unruliness of the objects of its investigations. The institutionalized legitimacy of functionalism makes it all the more difficult for scholars to construct alternative interpretations of leadership. According to Foucault, elaborating such alternatives is the work of the intellect.

Perhaps, following Gage (1979), one might defend the academy for having tried to develop the scientific basis of administration. It must be admitted that, although research into the administration of schools has produced little in the way of scientific law,[6] it has probably successfully described the

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[6]Robert Michels' (1962) "iron law of oligarchy" is a good example of the type of law produced by administrative science. Brym (1980), in a cogent essay on intellectuals and politics, develops a countervailing "iron law of democracy" and shows how, as power relations change, this countervailing "law" may work to undo the achievements of oligarchy, even in large organizations. It might be said that Michels has used scientific methods to interpret a principle of situational leadership in large organizations. The principle reflects a scientific basis, therefore, but also contains a large measure of common sense. Such research often ends--after much labor--by confirming and formalizing the hunches of common sense. Applying the methods of science, the educational intelligentsia interprets how schools work in order to distinguish the validity of competing common-sense perceptions. In reality, this is a political, not a scientific function. Moreover, the findings of such research have practical use in schools only to the extent that teachers and administrators can themselves interpret the findings. Because isolated findings of educational research have limited generalizability, a second cadre of the educational intelligentsia has arisen to interpret research results to practitioners. This function, too, may be a political, not a scientific or intellectual function--as in proselytizing school reform efforts.

commonly sensed experience of managing. Such descriptions are useful for informing an ethos of management.[1]

Absent other interpretations of schooling, however, the scientific basis of knowledge about administration may be difficult to apply. The "visionary" or "charismatic" qualities so often ascribed to individual leadership, together with the problematic relationship of leadership to the informal organization ("the zone of special density" in Barnard's ironic phrase) make such science especially difficult to interpret either as practice or as understanding. Leadership lacks half the picture. Neither formalized common sense nor charismatic vision is sufficient when systematic institutional change is the order of business.

The discovery of the informal organization. In education, interest in leadership may be traced to the role specialization of complex formal organizations. "Scientific" (business) management elaborated the specialized role of manager and it articulated an associated "mental revolution," and educators imported the role of manager wholesale early in the century (Callahan, 1962). Hence, the position of manager established school administrators as individuals who headed the formal organization of the school.

Subsequent studies of (business) organizations interpreted the influence of the informal organization within the formal organization (e.g., Barnard, 1938; MacGregor, 1960). Whereas the formal organization is an entity to be

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[1] "These so-called [administrative] sciences are substantially bodies of maxims of expediency for guidance in the leisure-class office of government, as conducted on a proprietary basis. The interest with which this discipline is approached is therefore not commonly the intellectual or cognitive interest simply. It is largely the practical interest of the exigencies of that relation of mastery in which the members of the class are placed." (Veblen, 1899, p. 32)

managed, the informal organization, science discovered, is an entity to be led. The object of management is manipulation of operations; the object of leadership is typically the manipulation of people (Garman, 1986).[1]

The "discovery" by administrative science of the informal organization was predicted early on by a skeptical Thorsten Veblen.[2] Veblen's observation of the significance of "the personal relation" points up the fact that administrators were bound, once they had established workable industrial corporations, to pay attention to the social networks thus also created.

The informal organization is actually an outgrowth of its oversight. By this I mean two things. First, the informal organization did not exist before the development of the institutions that produced it (for example, the industrial corporation). The construction of the institutions of mass production created, first, the formal organization by virtue of which factories, for example, could be said to exist. Planning, organizing, delegating, supervising, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting were everything in these early years. Inattention to the emerging informal organization was natural at first: management's "oversight" of a phenomenon not yet named.

Second, the formal organization--hierarchical, increasingly bureaucratic, and, in the modern ideal, of immense size--inevitably created characteristic social networks, once industrial organizations were formed. In their undifferentiated form such social networks are known by administrative science

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[1]Not necessarily a pejorative usage: "He knows how to handle people." Handling people is the technology of leadership.

[2]"The true-bred gentleman of leisure should, and does, see the world from the point of view of the personal relation; and the cognitive interest, so far as it asserts itself in him, should seek to systematize phenomena on this basis." (Veblen, 1979, p. 385)

as "the informal organization" (cf. Barnard, 1983). They are obscure to the manager ("zone of special density"), they are unpredictable, and their management is a challenge. The key feature, however, of these social networks, as Veblen's remarks imply, is that they are to be overseen. It is difficult to punish, cajole, or patronize informal organizations with great success: Informal groups are fickle servants of management (e.g., Pfeffer, 1977). Cunning leadership, rather than rationalistic management, is called for.

This account suggests that managers must oversee the informal organization in order to maintain or improve the efficiency of an established organization (i.e., a corporate entity). Perhaps it was through such an insight that Barnard arrived at the definition of corporate efficiency as the extent to which employees' individual motives were satisfied. This original definition provides an inroad to the zone of special density and links invisible motives, the informal organization, effectiveness, and--in Barnard at least--enduring purpose (or "mission"). Cunning leadership recognizes that subordinates, too, are subjects who can be enticed to support corporate ends.

If subordinates, however, are subjects, and if managers enter into dialogue with them over ends, subordinates have the opportunity (really the freedom, given the opening provided by dialogue) to influence corporate ends (cf. Foucault, 1988 on freedom and power). If the manager remains faithful to the prescribed mission of the formal organization, too much leadership may end, as Carnoy's statement in the epigraph indicates, in leadership that leads by "by allowing others to lead." Unless the organization has formalized democratic ends and means, then, the cunning manager must conceive ways to

dominate the dialogue about legitimate purpose, that is, to "manipulate" subordinates.

This oversight of legitimate purpose--in the name of effectiveness and by means of motive (i.e., efficiency as defined by Barnard)--is the ultimate responsibility of managerial leadership. The informal organization, however, can lay an equal claim, on a democratic basis, to the same oversight, once embarked on dialogue with management. The only way out of this dilemma seems to be development of purposive corporate structures that neutralize the prerogatives of management: employee-owned and managed corporations, profit-sharing schemes, quality circles, and so forth.[10]

Another definition of leadership. Whereas management, with a more limited scope, clearly entails skills to be mastered by an individual, it is nonetheless not so clear that leadership, with a much more encompassing scope, need be vested in an individual nor that it need entail specific skills. In the view of many observers, leadership differs from management in being both more personal and more visionary (Yukl, 1982). Such observers believe leadership to entail such qualities as intuition, empathy, tact, courage, and foresight.

Whether or not such qualities comprise teachable "skills" is, however, problematic. Because schools do have managers (principals, superintendents, supervisors), and because the construct of educational leadership has been

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[10]These three examples may perhaps represent a continuum of power. Site-based management of schools, if it works, resembles the operation of a quality circle. Ownership and profit-sharing are--since education differs from manufacturing and business--not avenues of power in schools. As an advisory arrangement, however, site-based management differs little from the individual managerial style known as "participative decision-making." As Yukl (1981) points out, the key question for managers is when and how much participation to permit.

defined in this context, much research and development has sought to define "leadership skills" that can be taught to individuals in such positions (e.g., Yukl, 1982; Watkins, 1986).[11]

Definitions of leadership vary according to the object of study--behavior, interpersonal transaction, or the characteristics of organizations, for example. The various definitions of leadership reflect some of the commonalities shared by administrators of twentieth century organizations:

- First, formal organization in the modern era seems to entail (1) the need for management and (2) the existence of formal managerial authority. Formal organization implies hierarchy (cf. Taylor, 1947).
- Second, particular formal organizations necessarily pretend to legitimate (authoritative) purposes (cf. Weber, 1947; e.g., the aims of education, however defined). Legitimate purpose underlies the continuing existence (or perhaps the degree of effectiveness) of particular schools and, more generally, the prevalence of schooling as a social institution (where "institutions" are a more abstract kind of organization).
- Third, formal organizations accomplish their purposes through the agency of many individuals, whose actions, although circumscribed by the formal hierarchy of the organization, seem nonetheless to them (i.e., the individual actors) to be shaped more immediately by the spirit of the informal organization (Barnard, 1938; i.e., the collaborative that, for better or worse, must inhabit the formal organization).

The following definition tries to capture these commonalities, while providing for a way to relate leadership to an institutional presence and

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[11]When power is at stake, educational "leaders" are an optimistic lot; rarely will they question if it is possible to learn a hypothetical skill. They know for certain that instruction, if funded, will take place; therefore it is possible to "teach" leadership skills. Whether or not the research actually supports such development is doubtful. Yukl (1982), while citing the critical need for more and better research, nonetheless promotes training to develop leadership skills. In general, the assumptions upon which the investigations of leadership are based anticipate the development of efforts to teach the putative skills of leadership to managers (especially principals).

admitting the possibility that leadership may not solely or primarily be an attribute of individuals:

> Leadership is the effective oversight of legitimate purpose. It focuses on how people work together to define, protect, maintain, and pursue a mission.

This definition avoids specifying whether a group is the object or the subject of leadership; that is, for example, whether or not the leader acts upon the informal organization or the informal organization acts somehow to exert leadership. Its silence on this head distinguishes this definition from others. At the same time, the definition incorporates some of the major themes that have occupied the attention of researchers (effectiveness, authority [i.e., legitimacy], collaborative process). It also allows for an institutional interpretation of the phenomenon.

Leadership role: Conceptual and empirical limitations. Authority for effective oversight (of both operations and legitimate purpose) is typically vested in an individual manager. Hence, most of the research about leadership has examined the behavior of individual managers, on the assumption that it is they who do lead.

The role of a vested leader, however, is not leadership. Three points illuminate this contention.

First, vesting leadership in an individual manager--the typical case--may obscure the locus of leadership by ignoring alternative hypotheses to an individual locus. Effective oversight of legitimate purpose might--in some or even many cases--not entail individual leadership, despite the fact that the existence of individual managers causes it to be assumed. This oversight of research is all the more curious since it is a familiar theme in intellectual

history, sociology, social psychology, economics, and radical political economy.[12]

Second, a role may be filled well or badly. Ineffective leadership, however, is an oxymoron. A bad leader is no leader at all. Research makes of this dilemma a method (cf. Veblen, 1979). A prime purpose has been to separate the goats (managers of ineffective organizations) from the sheep (managers of effective organizations). As Yukl (1981) notes, the causal inference that the characteristics of the sheep are responsible for the effectiveness of the organization is, in fact, unwarranted. It is simply not clear whether the characteristics of the organization cause the manager's behavior, or vice versa. Yet this base of research has served to define the "skills of educational leadership" for emulation by others similarly placed.[13]

Third, not everything a manager does pertains to the oversight of legitimate purpose (nor could such single-minded attention to leadership reasonably be expected of a successful manager). This observation, though, does raise the question of how <u>much</u> leadership should be exercised by managers. As implied above, too much leadership may entail loss of managerial dominance. This question is also appropriate since leadership is so often viewed as a matter of degree (and measured as a mathematically continuous

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[12]Legitimate oversight is as much a matter of ignoring ("overlooking") certain alternatives, dismissing out of hand certain critiques, and reserving the right to impose by action the effects of such "oversights" on the lives of others. Researchers are no less free of such power than bureaucrats and politicians.

[13]This research is a kind of subsistence farming (it consumes what it grows without profit), but, unlike subsistence farming, it lacks the natural checks and balances of the material world. It not only counts its chickens before they hatch, it ignores the need to use fertilized eggs. When neither eggs nor meat are required, the farmers' families consume mechanical chickens.

variable). For example, in some organizations it may be that managers need exercise only a little leadership, whereas in others the role may be major part of what a manager does (Yukl, 1981).

When a manager does not exercise leadership, however, one may ask, "Where has it gone?" and "Who (or what) is providing leadership?" (e.g., Kerr & Jermier, 1978). The notion of leadership as the oversight of legitimate purpose in the context of the informal organization provides a clue. A manager need not attend to the leadership role, so long as the organizational entity (i.e., the informal organization) collectively sees after legitimate purpose.[14]

Cohesive work groups, fulfilling work, and an internalized mission may be more than "substitutes" for leadership: They may in fact constitute leadership. Research that interprets leadership as a set of skills to be taught to a particular cadre of managers (particularly educational managers) overlooks such a possibility. The idea of a "leadership role" for managers, though it appeals to common sense, is subject to the oversight of common sense.[15]

One of the empirically-derived maxims of administrative science pertinent here is that leadership is situational. That is, effective leadership somehow inheres in the group in which the manager works and in the

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[14]Perhaps "organizational climate" is the construct that captures this hypothetical feature of leadership. When the informal organization is comprised of talented, purposive, and mutually supportive colleagues, perhaps individual leadership is unnecessary. When needed, perhaps it functions to restore a healthy organizational climate. In so doing, this sort of intervention serves as a substitute for leadership. Once a healthy climate is restored, leadership is also restored to the group, and the temporary need for individual leadership ends. These sorts of leaders come and go; managers, however, persist, so leadership appears ambiguous (cf. Pfeffer, 1977).

[15]That is, common sense says that leadership requires a leader.

larger environment in which the organization manages somehow to persist. This conclusion is either the stuff of common sense (i.e., some people do well in certain settings, but not in others) or it has arrived at the contradiction that suggests its assumptions are false. Namely, it is possible to infer from this conclusion that the locus of leadership is not an individual at all, but lies in the interactions of the group that produces goats or sheep in managerial positions.

Leadership relates to how groups form, coalesce, grow, decline, and die as human events. It is difficult any longer to credit the view that history (even the history of an organization) is the province of an individual leader. Perhaps the questions that ought to concern practical researchers and middle-range theorists are those having to do with how informal organizations shape the purposes of the formal organizations they inhabit. Taking the competing views that teachers and administrators are (1) bureaucrats (cf. Kuhlman & Hoy, 1974), (2) technicians (cf. Baer & Bushell, 1981), or (3) "transformative intellectuals" (cf. Giroux, 1983) might help establish the etiology of leadership in schools.

The power of leaders. Although research about leadership tends to locate the phenomenon in individual managers in particular situations, it is equally clear that particular organizations combine, in the abstract, to form social institutions with more generalized connections to one another and especially to sources of institutional domination (cf. Mills, 1959b). Further, the individual organizations through which individuals experience social institutions respond to, and most often, act on behalf of those sources of

power.[16] Such organizations, in fact, may function primarily to legitimate the domination of social institutions (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Mills, 1959) and to perpetuate the social norms that reinforce domination (e.g., Friedenberg, 1963; Meyer, 1977; Meyer, Tyack, Nagel, & Gordon, 1979; cf. Etzioni, 1985).

Mills (1959a) notes that power relations are usually ignored by positivist researchers--those principally interested in the situational determinants of leadership (Watkins, 1986).[17] The terms used to distinguish leadership from management, however, point to the fact that the search for leadership is a search for those willing to exercise organizational power (as implied in the movement to inculcate the virtues of instructional leadership in principals). As the chief institution in post-industrial society (Bell, 1976; Jencks et al., 1979), schools, if not sure instruments of domination, have at least been a contested ground of liberty, equality, and fraternity for a very long time (e.g., Willower, 1987). Perhaps individual (managerial) leadership is important because it entails the exercise of authority (institutional legitimacy) and (organizationally legitimated) power to dominate the informal organization in the pursuit of organizational goals (Watkins, 1986). This "skill" of domination is institutionally useful because informal organizations tend, in most formulations to be disorganized, and

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[16]Domination is tyrannical power (Foucault, 1988). In earlier essays (Howley, 1990a; 1990b), I pointed to restoration of global economic domination as an aim that business institutions seek to inflict on educational institutions. This tendency is not a cultural or temporal anomaly, but reflects institutional practices of power in the United States.

[17]The term "positivist" refers to researchers whose efforts are intended to guide reform. "Functionalism" is the dominant method of such researchers because, briefly, it focuses on understanding what works. What goes awry is of less interest, in part, because it may entail fundamental critique of the status quo.

either unruly or passive (Barnard, 1938; Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Watkins, 1986). Organizational goals, in this analysis, are not likely to come from teachers and students--nor for that matter from principals--but likely to be handed down by the politicians and bureaucrats who mediate on behalf of dominating interests (notably including the institutions of business).[11] In the case of individual leaders this exercise of power has been determined by administrative science to operate through a complex of variables that capture variations inherent in some situations (Fiedler, 1978; Hersey & Blanchard, 1977; House, 1971; Yukl, 1971).

This is the empirical basis from which the hypothetical "skills" of leadership are usually inferred (Yukl, 1982). Hence, the exercise of power in schools becomes the technology of educational leadership (Watkins, 1986). Goals are usually predetermined (at times by dominant institutions operating covertly through governmental authority), and the trick of the individual educational manager is to get the informal organization to take willing "ownership" of these goals.

Intellect and the Power to Reform: A Foucauldian Interpretation

Intellect is more than intelligence and knowledge. It is the favorable disposition toward--and habit of--engaging the mind to construct meaning (cf. Brym, 1980; Hofstadter, 1963; Storr, 1988). Intellect is not cared for well by American schools at any level (Bell, 1973; Coleman, 1963; Hofstadter, 1963; Katz, 1986; Katz, personal communication, May 17, 1990; Weiner, 1950).

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[11]Business representatives on local school boards are already responding to the models laid down by national and state "leaders." The central office of a local county, for example, recently circulated a mission statement dramatically more specific (in meeting the business agenda) than the preceding mission statement (which spoke vaguely of basic skills and good citizenship).

Intellect may, however, be bent by social institutions to particular predetermined purposes, or it may, according to Michel Foucault's formulation, "care for the self" (Foucault, 1988). In the latter capacity, it is concerned with the interpretation of the world, with what Foucault calls "games of truth." Interpreting truth is, according to Foucault, the principal way to escape domination: It is a legitimate (ethical) way to exercise power."

Leadership and care of the self. That schools serve as mechanisms of domination on behalf of major social institutions is not only a tenable hypothesis, it is a probable fact. First, society could not support schools if they did not at least serve the purposes of major social institutions. Second, as Cheney (1990) and Bell (1976) suggest, our society may well be experiencing a general crisis of institutions. The source of the crisis is debatable, but it seems to proceed materially from changes in social relations of production inherent in an emerging post-industrial, trans-national world order (e.g., Gouldner, 1976; Leontief, 1982; Jacobs, 1984).

Second (to put the matter in practical terms), most observers agree that not only are the schools capable of being coercive, they very often are (Willower, 1987). A large proportion of the Gross National Product is devoted to education (in comparison to the proportion of GNP devoted by other developed nations to education), yet the expenditures "produce" comparatively

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"According to Foucault (1988, pp. 11-12), domination is a relation of power that is all one sided. Foucault places care for the self at the center of the dialogue of truth and power. Lack of concern for truth and for the logic by which humans determine truth leads inevitably to enslavement. Truth, however, emerges only from the attempt to construct meaning. It emerges neither from facts alone nor from common sense. Accordingly, "the problem is not of trying to dissolve [relations of power] in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law ... which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination [emphasis added]" (Foucault, 1988, p. 18).

weaker standings. Such are additional evidence that schools in the United States function widely to repress students' intellectual aspirations (see Coleman, 1963; Oakes, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1975 for similar evidence).[10]

In any case, a number of astute observers support the view that domination either (1) may be an institutional purpose of schooling in the United States, under certain rather prevalent conditions (e.g., Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Cuban, 1982; Wigginton, 1985) or (2) is, in fact, the chief observable purpose of schooling (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Giroux, 1983).[11]

Foucault's concepts of institutions relate to domination and the role of organizational manager (e.g., a manager of meaning). These concepts supply a context in which it is possible to see more clearly the connection between individual leadership in schools and the means by which schools deny intellect. If one accepts the contention that schools often serve as mechanisms of domination, what of the intellect of students, teachers, and managers? The question entails the way in which truth and power are understood to relate to one another in education as an institution.

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[10]Missing from some interpretations, of course, is the notion of power relations, specifically relations of domination organized institutionally. Etzioni (1961), for example, views coercion as counterproductive in schools; the more efficient route to compliance is to inculcate "appropriate" norms (Etzioni, 1985). Determining appropriate norms is easy in this view; it is not even a technical question. Appropriate norms are transparent to common sense. Bell (1976) implies that this view is precisely the problem in the post-industrial world: Appropriate norms are anything but transparent, and major social institutions no longer provide legitimate guidance. Lacking such guidance, one might argue that the schools impose an illegitimate set of norms, in fact, the reactionary norms needed to protect vested interests.

[11]Perhaps one can distinguish between "true" education and the intermediate social institution of education. Whereas the schools may serve as agents of other institutions (the nuclear family, the liberal polity, and the free-enterprise economy), colonizing the young for particular social, economic, or political ends (cf. DeYoung, 1990), "true" education is care of the self.

An educational ethos. Before proceeding, however, let me clarify what the purpose of education is, in intellectual terms, according to Foucault:

> If you care for yourself correctly, i.e., if you know ontologically what you are, if you also know of what you are capable, if you know what it means for you to be a citizen in a city, to be the head of a household in an oikos, if you know what things you must fear and those that you should not fear, if you know what is suitable to hope for and what are the things on the contrary which should be completely indifferent for you, if you know, finally that you should not fear death, well, then, you cannot abuse your power over others.
>
> (Foucault, 1988, p. 8)

Meaning and knowledge figure prominently in this passage, and a strong ethical charge is placed on the individual to interpret the world. Care of the self takes priority over care for others because, grounded in concern for the truth, it is the prior condition of care of others. This view is related to power: Given the opportunity of freedom, lack of care for the self is a principal source of domination (Foucault, 1988). Foucault's views of institutions, however, suggest that care of the self often requires resistance to institutional domination, throughout history, but especially in the modern era.

In Foucault's analysis, power (the innate urge to influence the actions of others) is not inherently unethical; indeed, opportunities for freedom are everywhere precisely because the opportunities for power are everywhere.[11] Only in domination does the realm of freedom narrow intolerably.

The critical role of intellect is to challenge domination, even when that domination is "linked to structures of truth or to institutions charged with

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[11]Freedom is thus interpreted not as the opposite of domination, but as the condition of legitimate power.

truth" (Foucault, 1988, p. 15). In so doing, intellect speaks (telling truth) of the needs of both legitimate (ethical) power and freedom.

Unfortunately, Foucault himself never spoke to the institution of education in an extended work. His interpretations of madness and criminality (Foucault, 1965; 1979) are illustrative, however. One illustration from Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1979) will suffice to introduce the relationship between institutional domination and organizational leadership in schools.

Bourgeois leadership: Surveillance and institutional domination. The original title of Discipline and Punish (in French) is Surveiller et Punir (literally "Surveillance and Punishment").[11] "Surveiller" encompasses the practices of oversight, regulation, and management. Surveillance--in this sense--is the heart of Foucault's analysis of major social institutions, for which prisons and mental hospitals are exemplary.

In the context of the massive social and economic changes of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, surveillance (in this sense of simultaneous oversight, regulation, and management) emerges as the institutional technology of domination. The nature of crime and madness, of law, of evidence, and of punishment and treatment change dramatically as a result.

For example, Foucault interprets the shift from an "illegality of rights" (in the 17th century) to an "illegality of property" that persists to this day. In the seventeenth century world, implies Foucault (1979, p. 82), the privileges of social strata were defined not by the rule of law, but by "non-application of the rule." In short, people tolerated a "necessary illegality"

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[11]With Foucault's consent, the translator substituted "discipline" for "surveiller." The two French terms are infinitives, which, as in English, may function as nouns.

(of rights) as part of their class identity, and together these illegalities gave society political and economic coherence (p. 83). The significant point is that each class laid claim to certain types of illegality, and each recognized the others' "illegal" prerogatives.

With the increase of wealth and population that began around 1750, according to Foucault, theft replaced smuggling and resistance to tax agents, as the principal "popular illegality" (p. 84). Thereafter,

> the way in which wealth tended to be invested, on a much larger scale than ever before, in commodities and machines, presupposed a systematic, armed intolerance of illegality [emphasis added].
>
> (Foucault, 1979, p. 85)

Surveillance arose as the increasingly systematized technology of monitoring the thoughts, words, and actions of citizens.[14] Moreover, according to Foucault (p. 87), "the bourgeoisie reserved to itself the fruitful domain of the illegality of rights." The new commercial and industrial classes began to define institutions capable of systematically managing threats to property, especially from the propertyless classes, but initially, of course, from the landed gentry as well.

Leadership as the "management of meaning"[15] (Smircich & Morgan, 1982) is

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[14]The very word "citizen" connotes an individual with a specialized political and economic role in the nation state. In a previously quoted passage, however, Foucault harkens back to a Greek (small city-state) usage.

[15]"Management of meaning," Smircich and Morgan's phrase, and "oversight of legitimate purpose" convey similar intent, with the difference that the former embraces the preeminent role of the individual manager. The former phrase, therefore, also accepts the issue of an officially predetermined authority as a necessary prior condition of leadership. As Bell (1976) notes, a crisis of authority, especially as regards "games of truth" (cf. Foucault, 1988), is now a major problem of bourgeois institutions. Most who write narrowly on the topic of leadership have difficulty interpreting the state of

(continued...)

significant in this historical context. The significance, however, concerns class leadership, a concept radically at odds with the notion of leadership that permeates the literature on organizational management. This simple notion will, as intimated earlier, be very familiar to students of history, sociology, and economics.

For a society as a whole, meaning is managed by its institutions (cf. Meyer, 1977, on the institutional purposes of schooling). In highly developed capitalist nations, meaning is structured by national institutions that began to evolve late in the 18th century. In fact, the shift from a (tolerant) illegality of rights to an (intolerant) illegality of property can be interpreted as the principal work of the bourgeoisie--the rising class of commercial and manufacturing interests whose work has radically transformed the world in two brief centuries.[11]

In Foucault's analysis, prisons and mental hospitals are paragons of the rigor that polices the illegality of property. Bourgeois institutions have developed and deployed (to such organizations as prisons, mental hospitals, and schools) technologies of surveillance that encompass not only the operation of those organizations per se, but that have motivated the disciplines of psychology, psychiatry, sociology, law, medicine, and education.

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[11](...continued)
bourgeois institutions, in part because, as managers, they are so committed to (vested in) those institutions (e.g., Bennis, 1990).

[11]Some scholars, like Bell (1976), are, however, concerned that in the post-industrial world the institutions of bourgeois society are becoming dysfunctional. Whether a "new class" will provide the necessary leadership is debatable (Brym, 1980; Gouldner, 1976).

Reform, therapy, training, and inculcation are accomplished on the basis of careful scrutiny. Meaning is managed, institutionally, in large part by distinguishing what is normal from what is abnormal, and a massive intrusion of institutional power is bought into play in order to redeem the abnormal.

Managers as functionaries. In fact, the reason that organizations like prisons, mental hospitals, and schools are themselves objects of perpetual reform may be that they, like individual prisoners, students, and mental patients, require surveillance in order that they perform their institutional missions.[17] The recent widespread use of political power to legitimate the increased surveillance of schools (i.e., improved "accountability") is perhaps symptomatic of a post-industrial crisis of (bourgeois) institutions. Politicians find it expedient to intervene on behalf of representatives of society's dominant institutions (i.e., the free-enterprise economy, business) to harness schooling more closely to the task of producing human capital.[18]

For whatever reason, few school managers find it possible to resist the institutional need for increased surveillance.[19] Instead, they carry out the new mandates, perhaps bargaining for such reciprocal influence as can be

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[17]That is, as constituent parts of major social institutions (such as the nuclear family, the liberal polity, and the free-enterprise economy) and of intermediate social institutions (such as religion, education, business, medicine, technology, and so forth). Whereas "the prison" may be construed as a minor institution, a particular prison or a consortium of prisons may (like a school district) be an organization.

[18]In the past, such intervention did not call for direct evidence of the desired result. New technology can, however, supply such evidence, or at least it can offer suitable proxies at reasonable cost. As inherent institutional authority erodes, direct "accountability" becomes all the more necessary.

[19]Possibly they lack the motive or the critical tools to pose the relevant questions.

negotiated--funds for consolidated schools, support for curriculum initiatives, exemptions from certain other impositions of the state. Such a reaction is appropriate for functionaries. Functionaries, in Foucault's analysis, carry institutional power to the level of the individual.

Domination, school "reform," and educational leadership. One of the remarkable features of school reform in the 1980s was how similar were its features wherever undertaken, which was almost everywhere (e.g., DeYoung, 1989). Again and again, the need for compliance and surveillance was reflected in statutes adopted by state legislatures, usually with the support and prodding of business organizations. At the national level the collection of data has received continuous attention. Strong educational leadership is part of this agenda, and such reform effectively manages the meaning of leadership in the context of schooling.

Those who, in official capacities in organizations that seek to structure relations of domination, effectively manage subordinates' interpretations of meaning are, in fact, functionaries of domination. Leadership in the sense of caring for others and thereby exercising oversight of legitimate purpose does not apply. Perhaps this is the true reason educational and instructional leadership are in such short supply.

The Intellect of Teachers as Subordinates and as Colleagues: A Postscript

One may infer from the preceding analysis that the source of leadership resides not in individuals, but in the institutions that, in Smircich and Morgan's phrase, "manage meaning" for society as a whole. If school managers are not leaders in the sense of exercising oversight of legitimate purpose in

the context of the informal organization, what of their subordinates, teachers?

First, if the schools function to cultivate lopsided relations of power among certain strata of society, then it follows that teachers are those who carry out the details of this function. Like their superiors, they too, may be charged with being functionaries. In this capacity (i.e., disciplinarian), teachers carry out a mission of surveillance, and often appear to be in conflict with their students (Friedenberg, 1963; Cuban, 1982; Cusick, 1973; Kozol, 1963; Willower, 1987).

Second, at the same time, teachers, as well as students, comprise informal organizations that typically resist the formal apparatuses of domination that permeate educational technology (Garman, 1986; Giroux, 1983). As institutional authority in the post-industrial world erodes (Bell, 1976), school managers meet with increasing difficulty in convincing informal organizations to acknowledge the legitimacy of the official purposes of schooling (e.g., becoming good workers and good citizens).

In fact, many teachers continue to work unaware of their role as institutional functionaries. After all, such relations of power seem remote and hypothetical, and many teachers (Vieth, 1981) have not developed the habits of thought (e.g., reading widely) that would let them perceive the power relations that dominate them (cf. Weaver, 1983). At the same time, teachers, by virtue of their authoritative role in the classroom and their wider experience of the world, have more latitude than students to exercise freedom of thought. Their roles in the informal organizations of schools also make an official role as functionaries more ambiguous than the official roles of school managers.

Teachers and the educative act. Not only are teachers more skeptical of the "need" for improved accountability (as themselves prime objects of the surveillance of the state), but they seem to be far more cognizant of the possibilities of schooling to enhance care of the self; at least they have a long tradition of articulating such possibilities (e.g., Highet, 1950; Keizer, 1989; Kohl, 1967; Wigginton, 1985).

Teachers may be less likely than educational managers to be functionaries and more likely than managers to be concerned with educative acts (as separate from the institution of education) that cumulate in the notion Foucault references as "care of the self." There is no doubt that teachers, for example, comprise the most (or perhaps, after students, the second most) dense "zone of special density" (informal organization) in schools. Examples of articulate individual teachers who engage this alternative mission are perhaps not so uncommon as popular opinion ("common sense") would lead on to suspect.

These observations suggest that teachers may be more likely to exercise leadership--as defined in this essay--than school managers. First, they are part of the informal organization that is the object of management. Second, their classroom domain is more closely related to the realm of intellect, so that some teachers will actually claim its legacy. Third, the ambiguity of their role as functionaries may make it more likely that they will transcend that role. Giroux in particular believes that their own resistance can lead teachers to become "transformative intellectuals."

At the same time, as Bell (1976) claims, the institutional authority of knowledge--especially in the humanities--is in jeopardy (cf. Cheney, 1990). Whereas individual teachers may develop a role for intellect in some classrooms, a movement to that end is unlikely to emerge in a school unless

faculties come to agree that such purposes are legitimate (Garman, 1986). Leadership of this sort is extremely difficult to enact because it opposes the domination that the reactionary institutional mission of education may entail (e.g., Oxendine, 1989).

Such challenges are not for individuals. Rather, they are for groups capable of perceiving, considering, and judging the relevant issues.

Noreen Garman (1986) is one of the few educators who seems to have appreciated the connections among the ideas discussed in this essay, particularly the role of intellect as the key element of a leadership that goes beyond the prerogatives of management. She writes (p. 9),

> To move into the next century...we need to look at the educative act itself.... If we can find ways to study this zone of action and give language to it, we may be able to understand better the transfer of knowledge, intellectual insight, and invention.... We'll stop talking about "implementation" and start talking about "action," and these actions will be part of that discourse. Perhaps we'll even start to think of the educative act as the dance of the intellect, [instead of using] the current miliary and industrial [metaphor] we now accept.

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